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# TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

## A Column on Consumer Issues

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### **WOMEN AND AUTO REPAIR**

Today's women account for more than half of all drivers, more than half of all automotive service and repair customers, and have substantial influence and veto power in the purchase of new and used vehicles. The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) reports that 65 to 80 percent of repair and service customers are women. It is important for women to take certain steps to ensure that auto repair experiences are positive ones.

Technicians report that women ask more questions, inquire about details and are more willing to look under the hood or check out parts than men. Also, there are more and more women entering the field as auto technicians than ever before.

ASE offers the following advice on how to find the right repair shop and how to effectively communicate with technicians and service advisors.

Do your homework:

- Before taking your vehicle in for service, make sure you do your homework. Start shopping for a repair shop before you need one. Ask friends and associates for their recommendations.
- Look for a neat, well-organized facility with vehicles equal in value to your own in the parking lot and modern equipment in service bays.
- Look for evidence of qualified technicians, such as trade school diplomas, advanced training certificates and ASE certification.

Once the choice is made:

- Start off with a minor job. If you are pleased, return with more complicated repairs.
- Be prepared to describe the symptoms and supply a written list of recent problems. Mention unusual sounds, odors, changes in acceleration, engine performance, and problems in handling, braking, steering, and vibrations.
- Get an estimate.

It is important that you stay involved in the repair process:

- Ask as many questions as you need. Request explanations in simple terms.

- Don't rush the service writer or technician to make an on-the-spot diagnosis. Ask to be called and informed of the problem course of action, and costs before the work begins.
- Before you leave, be sure you understand all shop policies regarding labor rates, guarantees and methods of payment. Leave a telephone number where you can be reached.

It is important to follow-up on the repairs by:

- Keeping good records; keep all paperwork
- Rewarding good service with repeat business. It is mutually beneficial for you and the shop owner to establish a relationship.

If the service is not all you expected, don't rush to another shop. Discuss the problem with the service manager or owner. Give the business a chance to resolve the problem. Reputable shops value customer feedback and will make a sincere effort to keep your business.

Today's maintenance and repair shops are no longer strictly men's territory. Like most relationships, a woman's best chance for a successful auto service experience is choosing a great shop and practicing good communication.

The Consumer Protection and Antitrust Division has a helpful brochure entitled "Taking the Scare Out of Auto Repair. If you would like a copy of this brochure, please call 1-800-472-2600

*The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404, toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or 1-800-366-6888 (w/TTY). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at [www.ag.state.nd.us](http://www.ag.state.nd.us).*

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